

Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council
Quarterly Meeting Minutes ~ December 1, 2022
via Microsoft Teams and In-Person / approved March 30, 2023

Agency of Transportation, Dill Building
2178 Airport Rd, Barre, VT 05641
Conference Room #122

In Person:	Mike Gruteke, Michelle John, Havah Walther
In MS Teams:	Kaiya Andrews, Amanda Bianchi, Betsy Choquette, Kate Daly, Anastasia Douglas, David Frye, Steve Kieselstein, Lindsey Owen, Candice Price, Beth Sightler, John Spinney, Jesse Suter, Crista Yagjian,
Absent:	Melanie Feddersen, Jonathan Gardner, Hillary Hill, Ted Looby, Adam Poulin, Courtney Quinlan,
Support Staff:	None
Guests:	Collins Twing
VTDDC Staff:	Kirsten Murphy, Susan Aranoff, Chelsea Hayward

1. Welcome:

The Meeting began at 10:00 am.

- **Ice Breaker**

Mike asked everyone to share their favorite memory/tradition for the December holidays.

Council members spoke lovingly of their families, childhood, foods, model villages and trains, ornaments, trees, pets, car rides, decorations, singing, and joy.

- **Guidelines for Hybrid Meetings**

Kirsten briefly went over general expectations to having a successful in-person and remote meeting.

- **Assign roles**

- Processor was David Frye
- Jargon Buster was Jesse Suter
- Equalizer was Michelle John

- **Adopt Meeting Minutes from September 29, 2022**

Motion: Crista made the motion to accept the meeting minutes from September with no corrections. Kaiya seconded. Vote was cast by consensus.

Motion passed.

2. Remembering Gina:

Kirsten spoke fondly of Gina who liked to “find hearts in nature” and take pictures of them to share. Susan explained why everyone was mailed their heart-shaped rocks. She asked folks to hold their rocks, feel their texture, and daydream about how each rock took its shape. “How are your rocks like people?” she asked.

Members held a moment of silence for Gina.

- **Hands on activity**

Members drew on their rocks. Everyone was encouraged to take selfies with their rocks when they were done and send them to VTDDC. Chelsea will put together a collage to share with Gina’s family.

- **Words from members. “Share your favorite flower or simply what is in your heart.”**

Members talked about how Gina was a strong advocate for the DD community. She was an artist. She was fierce and devoted to her family and friends. She was missed by all.

3. Policy Committee Report by Committee members:

Susan explained that VTDDC has a new platform each year. She talked about how VTDDC funds and supports other organizations and their advocacy, but the Council has their own issues to champion. She said, “We are often the ones who first bring things to light.” Things on the Council’s platform would be top priority for staff.

“If something is not on the platform it does not mean it’s not important, but platform items are our main focus as recommended by the Policy Committee,” Kirsten said.

Susan read the bullet points out loud for everyone to respond to (see attached).

The State has to follow the federal Medicaid rules, but funding will be delegated by the State at a later date. Members were curious how an Ombudsperson would be appointed and how it would be guaranteed neutrality. It's possible a non-profit with an advocacy mission could host the program.

Housing is a big need in Vermont. Some programs will pay landlords to fix their homes if they commit to five-years of housing certain individuals. VTDDC wants to get "people with disabilities" on that list of "certain individuals." The State of Vermont does not include people with disabilities in their HUD funding plan. A third bullet will be added to say, "State and Federal funding."

Medicaid fairness. The Workforce Crises keeps getting worse. Designated agencies are struggling to find the funding to pay staff fairly, so they are unable to deliver services that folks are legally entitled to. One council member rarely has a staff person, but he's supposed to get help daily.

Motion: Steve made the motion to accept the recommended 2023 Legislative Platform. Kate seconded.

Motion passed: 13-0-0.

Susan told members about VTDDC's story portraits and encouraged those who hadn't been interviewed yet to work with staff. It would be nice to hang everyone's portraits in the State House cafeteria or in libraries statewide.

Susan asked, "It's been thirty years since the Brandon Training School closed. What does that mean to you?"

"I have big ideas!" said David. "When I was in DC, it was a place to have your voice heard. Legislators down there need to hear the great things our state is doing. Let's hang something in the White House that says, "Vermont closed institutions!"

Council members talked about Howard Dean's speech at the closing of the training center and how it was to be paired with creating supportive structures. Where are the structures? This promise should not be put off any longer.

4. Presentation by Green Mountain Self-Advocates (GMSA):

GMSA presented a power point that was organized by each of the Council's 14 objectives in the State Plan. GMSA gave examples of how their work, which is supported financially by the Council, supports each objective.

5. Lunch:

Lunch went from 12:00pm to 1:00 pm.

6. Executive Director's Report by Kirsten Murphy:

Kirsten shared her screen.

- She has made a handout and 3 recordings that explained Year 1 of the Five-Year State Plan.
- She told members to expect a one-on-one call with her sometime in the next few months to discuss how disability-related issues affect them
- VTDDC has received \$25,000 for a housing study, which the Council is required to do under Act 186.
- The Council will be hosting a storytelling event in the late winter or early spring. Members can submit stories if they would like to be selected as presenters. Staff are available to help members craft their stories.

7. Program Committee Report by Committee members:

There's a lot in the workplan. Kirsten recommended everyone break into groups to discuss three objectives. The groups will brainstorm ideas to deliver the following:

- Objective 4.1, Raising Awareness.
- Objective 1.5, Informing Families.
- How to celebrate the 30-year anniversary of the closing of the Brandon Training School.

Council members broke into three groups, two remote and one in person, to talk about events and gatherings to meet these objectives. Their "ah ha" moments were:

- “Keep the dreams alive.” What Brandon was and why it was closed. Have folks with disabilities share their hopes and dreams. Show movies about the closing throughout the State.
- More opportunities to tell stories.
- An op-ed piece with stakeholders.
- Accessibility and plain language (for example: “How to navigate your portal in the doctor’s office”). Medication side effects! Why do hospitals feel unsafe for people who use wheelchairs?
- Improving 211 instead of making a new website. Also, there will be a resource hub when there’s an Ombudsmen office established.

8. Public Comment:

There was no public comment.

9. Summarize Meeting:

David summarized the meeting. He felt that the meeting was wonderful and that a lot had been accomplished.

Mike asked members to think about serving on the Membership Committee and/or run for Chair or Vice Chair.

10. Adjourn:

The meeting adjourned at 2:25 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Chelsea Hayward

Att.

Attachment A – Roll-call Vote

Attachment B – Platform

Name	Vote 1		
	Yes	A.	No
Kaiya Andrews	1		
Amanda Bianchi	1		
Betsy Choquette			
Kate Daly	1		
Anastasia Douglas	1		
Melanie Feddersen			
David Frye	1		
Johnathan Gardner			
Mike Gruteke	1		
Hillary Hill			
Michelle John	1		
Steve Kieselstein	1		
Ted Looby			
Lindsay Owen, Esq.	1		
Adam Poulin			
Candice Price			
Courtney Quinlan			
Beth Sightler			
John Spinney	1		
Jesse Suter	1		
Havah Walther	1		
Crista Yagjian	1		
Write in others as needed			

Those in grey did not attend the meeting, were not present to vote, or passed their vote along to another Council member to share with the Council. [REDACTED]